

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

IO-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /070 W  
----- 119678

P 221250Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5702

USDEL JEC PARIS PRIORITY

CINCPAC HONOLULU PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5453

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT VS

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REACTION TO PRESIDENT THIEU'S RESIGNATION

1. INITIAL REACTION TO PRESIDENT THIEU'S RESIGNATION  
GENERALLY ONE OF RELIEF THAT COUP D'ETAT OR OTHER  
FORM OF VIOLENT GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE WAS AVERTED IN  
FAVOR OF ORDERLY PROCESS OF SUCCESSION THAT PRESERVED  
CONSTITUTIONALITY OF GVN. FEW PEOPLE EXPRESSED BELIEF  
HOWEVER, THAT PRESIDENT TRAN VAN HUONG ABLE TO PROVIDE  
DYNAMIC AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP CURRENT CRITICAL  
SITUATION DEMANDS. OTHERS CONTEND THAT ENTIRE THIEU  
GOVERNMENT MUST GO IN FAVOR OF BROAD-BASED ADMINISTRA-  
TION CAPABLE AND WILLING TO BRING CURRENT MILITARY  
CONTEST TO NEGOTIATING TABLE FOR COMPROMISE POLITICAL  
SETTLEMENT.

2. A NUMBER EMBASSY CONTACTS SAID THEY FELT PERSONALLY  
SORRY THAT THIEU HAD TO STEP DOWN BUT "RESIGNATION HAS  
GIVEN SOME PEOPLE HOPE THAT BLOODBATH CAN BE AVOIDED."  
PRO-GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PERSONALITIES ALIKE EXPRESSED  
VIEW THAT RAPIDLY DECLINING CREDIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS  
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OF THIEU AS UNIFYING NATIONAL LEADER IN WAKE OF RECENT

RVN MILITARY REVERSES, PRECLUDED HIS STAYING AT HELM DURING CURRENT CRISIS. AT SAME TIME, NO ONE CONTACTED BY EMBASSY BELIEVED HUONG COULD PLAY ANY ROLE OTHER THAN THAT OF FIGUREHEAD WITH NOMINAL POWER. ONE SENIOR GVN OFFICIAL SPECULATED THAT SITUATION WILL BEAR CAREFUL WATCHING TO DETERMINE WHO WILL ACTUALLY CONTROL LEVERS OF POWER AND STATED PERSONAL ASSESSMENT THAT INCUMBENT PRIME MINISTER NOT WELL KNOWN OR PROMINENT ENOUGH TO BECOME POWER BEHIND THRONE.

3. ALL SAIGON DAILIES OF APRIL 23 CARRIED BANNER HEADLINES ANNOUNCING RESIGNATION AND FRONT-PAGED PICTURES OF NEW PRESIDENT. CHINH LUAN (CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION) PROCLAIMED IN SUBHEADING ON FRONT PAGE THAT: "WHATEVER GOVERNMENT IS SET UP, IT WILL BE IN ORDER TO NEGOTIATE." SAME ISSUE CARRIED AFP ARTICLE TO EFFECT THAT PRESIDENT FORD HAD NOT COMPELLED THIEU TO RESIGN. CHINH LUAN ALSO CARRIED SUB-HEADING DECLARING THAT: "PRESIDENT THIEU DENOUNCED US FOR ITS INHUMANE ATTITUDE AND BETRAYAL OF RVN." PRO-GOVERNMENT QUAT CUONG HERALDED RESIGNATION AS "SUPREME SACRIFICE TO SAVE COUNTRY." THIEU'S 90 MINUTE ADDRESS (SAIGON 5405) WAS REBROADCAST SEVERAL TIMES ON RADIO TODAY, APRIL 23.

4. SENATOR, VU VAN MAU, LEADER OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION FORCE, (NRF) TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE HAD CALLED FOR THIEU RESIGNATION NUMEROUS TIMES AND WAS GLAD THAT LATTER FINALLY "SAW THE LIGHT". ASKED WHETHER OR NOT NRF WOULD NOW SUPPORT GVN, MAU REPLIED THAT "ENTIRE THIEU GOVERNMENT HAD TO BE REPLACED." DISMISSING PRESIDENT HUONG AS AN "OLD AND FEEBLE RELIC OF DISCREDITED GOVERNMENTS," MAU CONTENDED THAT TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO HE WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED HUONG BUT NOW LATTER TOO OLD AND SENILE. MAU ALSO SUGGESTED THAT OBJECTIVE POLL OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WOULD PRODUCE SAME CONCLUSION. NRF ALSO ISSUED A COMMUIQUE WHICH STATED THAT "MAINTAINING THIEU GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THIEU WILL NOT SOLVE ISSUE IN VN," AND SENATOR MAU DELIVERED HIGHLY CRITICAL ADDRESS OF THIEU TENURE IN OFFICE AND CONCLUDED THAT THIEU RESIGNATION IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT ONLY "TRUE" RECONCILIATION IS CONSISTENT WITH SUPREME INTEREST OF PEOPLE AND SVN "MUST ESCAPE FROM SWAMP IN

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WHICH MR. THIEU HAS BEEN SINKING DESPERATELY FOR PAST TEN YEARS BEFORE PEACE CAN BE RESTORED FOR COUNTRY."

5. MAYOR OF SAIGON AMONG THOSE WHO BELIEVE PRESENT GOVERNMENT MUST BE CHANGED IN ORDER TO BECOME MORE REPRESENTATIVE AND EFFECTIVELY DEAL WITH CURRENT SITUATION. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER TRAN VAN DO SAID THAT THIEU RESIGNATION MIGHT BUY SOME TIME BUT CAN GOVERNMENT WOULD

HAVE TO GO BECAUSE WITH HUONG AS PRESIDENT, REAL POWER WOULD BE PRIME MINISTER. HE ALSO SAID HIS GROUP OF MODERATE OPPOSITIONISTS HAD MET AND WERE CONTRIBUTING NAMES BUT DECLINED TO BE SPECIFIC.

6. ALMOST ALL MODERATE, PRO-GVN AND OPPOSITIONIST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT PRESENT GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE MERELY TRANSITIONAL AND THAT HUONG WILL ALSO STEP DOWN IN MATTER OF DAYS TO PAVE WAY FOR A MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT COMPRISED OF NATIONALLY PROMINENT PERSONALITIES WHICH WILL THEN WORK TOWARD STABILIZING SITUATION AND ACHIEVING NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THROUGH COMPROMISE. ONE SENIOR GVN OFFICIAL NOTED THAT AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO ASSIST RVN NOW A CRITICAL FACTOR AS GVN SORTS OUT ALTERNATIVES FOR ACHIEVING EARLY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. SAME SOURCE SAID THAT OTHER SIDE CAREFULLY ASSESSING US REACTION TO CURRENT EVENTS AND WILL NEGOTIATE ONLY WHEN IT BELIEVES THEIR FORCES CANNOT PUSH ON TO MILITARY VICTORY.  
MARTIN

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